

# Qat in Yemen

## Consumes 80% of Groundwater and 70% of the Pesticides

### Qat: One of the Causes of Family Disputes in Yemen

#### Qat Cultivation: an Economic Return and a Source of Income for Thousands of Families

##### Rituals of Qat and Shisha Gatherings and Clothes and Jewelry Bragged Among Women

**Qat:**

Popularity of Alerts About the Gravity of the Problem



Shawqi al-Abaasi

The problem of Qat no longer concerns a particular group or specific individuals, as it is a problem that falls on the shoulders of all members of the society to limit the spread of its cultivation and increase the number of those who buy it from the youth and adults to women and girls. Many Yemenis prefer to buy Qat at the expense of the basic needs of their families, which further exacerbates the living and economic conditions of thousands of them who have also become fond of it, being unable to quit, due to its impacts and magical effect on their bodies and psychological state. In recent years, Qat cultivation has spread considerably in Yemen, and has swept large areas of fertile agricultural land that was often cultivated with historical crops such as coffee, grapes, grains and vegetables. Although the Qat tree is not nutritious, many farmers have tended to cultivate it after finding it economically profitable which motivated them to do so in order to obtain a greater proportion of money. What increases the popularity of Qat chewing and its demand among all groups is the expansion of the circle of the Qat chewers "Muwalaa", in addition to the customs and traditions of the Yemeni community inherited on occasions, in which Qat is required to be present such as weddings, for instance, and when visits are exchanged on holidays, or any other occasion where it is imperative to have Qat as a social habit.

On the other hand, Qat has become the most cultivated and harvested product in Yemen, and the main source of income for many families in most governorates. Despite its negative effects, Qat has a positive side, as tens of thousands of families who have no other source of income than to cultivate and sell it work in this field. The phenomenon of Qat chewing is linked to aspects of the Yemeni citizen's life, as everything has become subject to the issue of Qat, and therefore it should not be addressed with emotions or urgency, as it affects people's lives. And to the extent that we, as Yemenis, feel hurt by the fact that our country's reputation and future have been damaged by this tree, the issue is related to the citizens and their interests, which in turn are linked to their livelihood.

... Continuation on page 2

Issue  
3

Pages  
12

Price  
Free

**Sawt Al-Amal**  
VOICE OF HOPE

Independent - Newspaper (Twice a Month) Published by Yemen Information Center  
01 / 3 / 2021 - Republish  
www.sawt-alamal.net

**مساحة وانتاج القات**  
Areas and Production of Qat

Areas and Production of Qat

السنوات / Years	المساحة (مليون هكتار) / Area (ha)	الانتاج (مليون طن) / Production (ton)
2019	~170,000	~230,000
2018	~165,000	~190,000
2017	~160,000	~190,000
2016	~165,000	~190,000
2015	~160,000	~190,000

**What's the Link between Male Infertility and Qat?**

**Qat: Societal Efforts in Sana'a and Youth Initiatives in Aden**

**80% of Males and 50% of Females Consume Qat**

#### Yemen Consumes 10 Thousand Tons Of Pesticides Annually

Yemen represents a huge market for the contraband of pesticides that enter in many ways and cause serious damages to citizen health and the quality of agricultural land.

Specialists assure that it exists seven smuggled of pesticides in the market which are severely toxic such as "Dimethoate", "Methomil", ..... Continuation on page 2

#### Corona Fails to Shut the Qat Sector in Yemen

Corona closed most airports, markets, venues and touristic sites around the world, but the deadly infectious disease failed to shut the Qat markets in Yemen. Despite several decisions taken by the competent authorities to shut the Qat markets, whether in Sana'a, Aden, Hadramout or other Yemeni governorates,

..... Continuation on page 2

#### Qat Hacks into the Feminist Community

The proportion of Yemeni women chewing Qat and smoking hookah in their private gatherings has risen. These sessions are usually group or individual ones, on a daily or weekly basis, accompanied by a number of rituals that are bragged about competed through and spread on social media, especially via WhatsApp, ..... Continuation on page 2

#### Qat Ranks Second on the Agricultural Product List in Yemen

The Qat tree occupies a large area of agricultural land that has expanded since the second half of the 19th century. So, its cultivation has extended to areas of historical agricultural crops in Yemen, such as coffee, grapes, grains, mangoes and a number of other crops in the valleys and agricultural bottoms in Dhamar, Amran, ..... Continuation on page 2



# Stages Of Qat In Yemen: Spread In 20 Countries And 80% of Yemenis Have Been It since 1762

By: Manal Amin

Sawt Al-Amal - (Voice of Hope)

**“ Almost every home in Yemen includes one or two people who chew Qat on a daily basis. They represent more than 80% of the country's population. The habit of chewing Qat is one of the daily habits that the grandchildren inherited from their grandparents, and it is present on various Yemeni occasions without exception.**

**And this plant is not only found in Yemen, but it is available in more than 20 countries in the world. As the population of different regions of East Africa, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda consume it. It is also found in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, and is cultivated in many places in the world as an ornamental plant like in Congo, Malawi, Southern Rhodesia, Mozambique, the Union of South Africa, Zaire, and others.**

## Qat: Unknown Discovery Date

In accordance with the history of the existence of the Qat tree in Yemen, many sources and studies have shown that its first existence in Yemen is still unknown, but many researchers believe that the tree was planted since ancient times, perhaps before Islam, despite the lack of evidence, in addition to the fact that it was not mentioned in the early Islamic writings. On the other hand, some accounts confirm that Qat entered Yemen in the sixth century A.D., coinciding with the entry of the Ethiopians to it for the first time. There are also other accounts that say that Qat came to Yemen in different periods of the eleventh, twelfth and sixteenth centuries, and its use was limited to the circles of Sufi groups, and it was used like coffee, where it was boiled and drunk.

The names given to the Qat tree differed from one country to another, as Qat is known in Latin as Catha Eodulis Forskal, and the Arabic name is “Khat”. In Europe, it is Catha, Khat, Kat, Qat, Ciat, while in Somalia it is called Khat, but the word is pronounced Tschat. The name that follows Qat in fame and usage is Mira, and this name spreads in Eastern and Southern Africa. As for Kenya, the names of Qat have multiplied to (Kat, Mirungi, Liss, Tumayot, Muraa, Khei, and Maonj), and it is called Tebej and Wattage in Abyssinia and Musitate in Uganda.

## Spread of Qat in Yemen

The habit of chewing khat is considered one of the inherited habits in Yemen, especially in the northern regions, where this habit started to emerge in 1762. As for southern Yemen, a license was issued in 1844 allowing traders to sell it.

As for the districts of Atma, Al Udayn district, Jabal Saber, Yafa city and Ad- Dali' Governorate, they are among the first Yemeni regions to know about the cultivation of the Qat tree. Regarding the governorate of Sana'a, it knew Qat at the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. in the Al-Hayma district, then it spread to Bani Matar, and in the middle of the same century, it began to spread in Hamdan district.

## Chewing Qat Rituals

The practice of chewing Qat often begins after lunch, in rooms called "diwans". These sessions are either individual or in groups, shared by friends and acquaintances. Also, this habit of chewing Qat accompanies weddings, funerals, and reconciliation sessions between tribes.

## Qat Revives the War Economy

According to the data of the Central Statistical Organization in 2017, Qat is the second largest cultivated area in Yemen, estimated annually at about 1.5 million hectares, with the cultivation area of Qat accounting for 16% of the total agricultural area.

Although the agricultural sector has been negatively affected by the conflicts that Yemen has gone through in successive periods of its history, the Qat trade has not been affected by the increasing demand for it, which prompted the



competent authorities to impose high taxes on the supply of Qat to cities, which has indirectly contributed to fueling the conflict economy.

Because of the lucrative financial returns of Qat, the Yemeni farmers headed to the cultivation of the latter instead of seasonal crops, which contributed to the expansion of the cultivated area of Qat from 7,000 hectares in 1972 A.D. to about 250,000 hectares in 2002 A.D.

## Attempt to Tackle Qat

In past centuries, the habit of chewing Qat was usually confined to the people of the upper and rich classes only, because it was expensive, and its cultivation was limited to specific farms. However, by the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, its customs and rituals began to widely emerge among the community, leading to irregular cultivation, which resulted in the submission of proposals to legalize the cultivation of Qat in Yemen. These proposals were repeated in successive periods of time, but over time, and for many reasons of interests to many agricultural landowners, the proposals and decisions failed, and have contributed indirectly to the spread of Qat cultivation in various governorates.

## Awareness-raising Campaigns Spread

As a result of the absence of clear laws lim-

iting the spread of Qat in Yemeni society, civil organizations and active institutions in the society have conducted a number of awareness-raising campaigns about the harms of Qat since January 12th, 2012, under the title “National Anti-Qat Day”. This campaign was followed by another campaign called “Government establishments without Qat”, which in turn helped to establish laws that would enable some ministries and institutions to prevent their employees from chewing Qat during official working hours. At that time, stops took place in front of the Yemeni parliament in Sana'a, which was considered the first of its kind, in order to approve a national strategy that would gradually solve the Qat problem, but it was rejected by the majority of parliament members and Qat traders, claiming that the latter is “green gold.”

In May 2013, the members of the National Dialogue Conference voted unanimously on a national strategy that gradually resolves the Qat problem, in cooperation with five ministries, so that this national strategy became a constitutional clause in the Yemeni draft constitution, on which no popular vote has yet been taken.

At the end of 2019 A.D., campaigns were carried out to uproot the Qat tree from an area estimated at about ten thousand square meters in Dhamar Governorate.

## Continuation From Front Page....

both the economy and the citizen.

## Yemen Consumes 10 Thousand Tons Of Pesticides Annually

“Ethan Train” and “the Ethion”. These pesticides were banned from entering the territory in 2006, since they were highly harmful and cancer related. So the agreed international guidelines were implemented to fight high-risks pesticides which are at the origin of cancerous diseases and others.

The engineer Ali Mahrez, head of the Field Experiments Department at the General Administration of Plant Protection, confirmed to “Voice of Hope” that the Qat consumes 70 percent of the pesticides and fertilizers that enter Yemen. Pointing out that the volume of pesticides that enter Yemen reaches 10 thousand tons annually, and the areas of Qat cultivation in Mawiyah in Taiz governorate, and Al-Mahabsha in Hajjah, Anas in Dhamar, Rada'a in Al-Bayda, and the Qat Al-Ballout area in Amran, and Al-Amari in Saada consume the largest amounts of agricultural pesticides.

## Corona Fails To Shut The Qat Sector In Yemen

those decisions soon failed and did not come to light. There are many difficulties and challenges facing the Yemeni citizen that continue to torment him from all sides, and the outbreak of the (Covid-19) virus has brought a new crisis to Yemen's deteriorating health sector. And, according to the World Health Organization, the number of people infected with the new Corona Covid-19 virus, as of mid-November, has reached approximately 2072 cases, of which 605 were fatalities. Despite the preventive measures taken in the country, the Qat sector remained an exception, as people were divided between supporters and opponents of its closure, coinciding with the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Yemen.

## Qat Hacks Into The Feminist Community

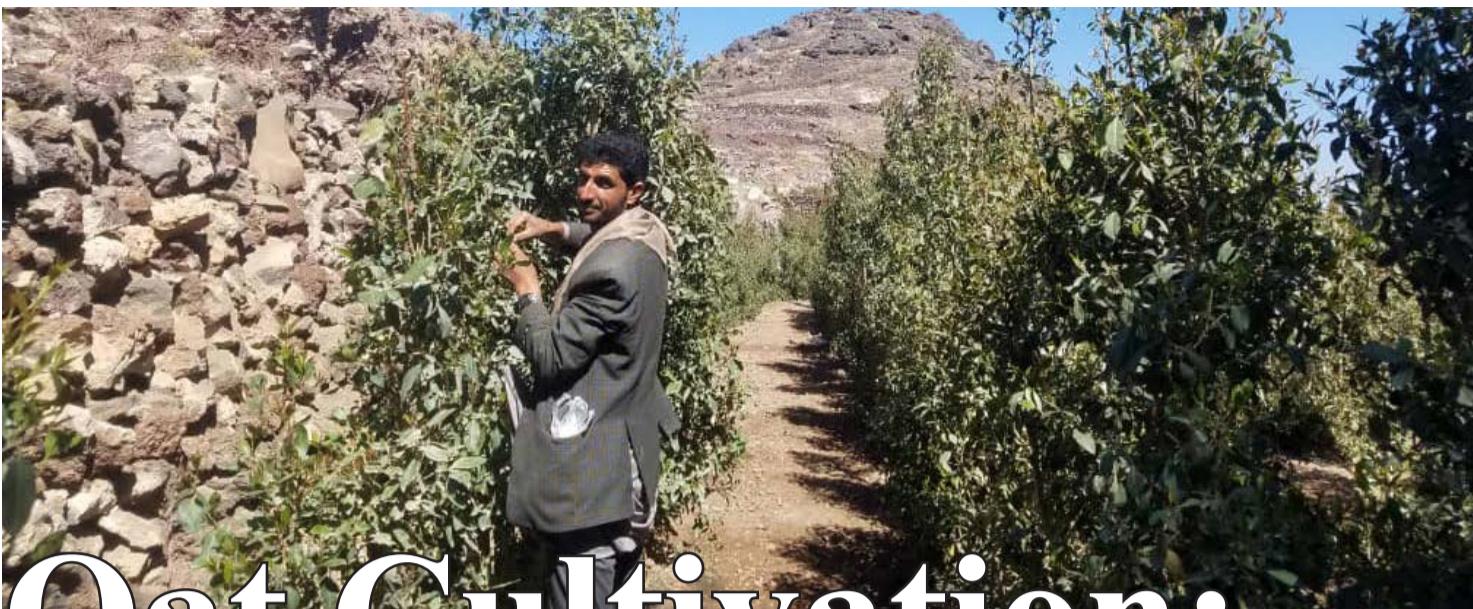
After the habit of chewing Qat was preserved to

men, it became usual to see women in the “Tafrifa” session (Female Qat session), where a large proportion of college girls and women, employees and housewives now attend women's Qat sessions, as the latter has become a daily ritual that they cannot give up.

## Qat Ranks Second On The Agricultural Product List In Yemen

Ibb and other areas, in addition to the urban expansion on agricultural lands in a number of governorates that are known for growing agricultural crops, which play a key role in the food security of Yemenis.

According to the Agriculture Statistics' Year Book of 2019, agricultural crops areas are estimated to be of 528078 hectares, where the Qat cultivation area ranked second after cereals and was estimated at 166,891 hectares. Therefore, it surpassed other crops such as fodder, grains, vegetables and cash crops, and pulses were ranked last with an estimation of 48,037.



# Qat Cultivation: an Economic Return and a Source of Income for Thousands of Families

By: Dawlat Al-Amiri  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

Despite the low average monthly income of Yemenis in general, a large segment of them spends the bulk of it on purchasing Qat, which negatively affects the living situation of the families. On the other hand, Qat is a main source of income for many Yemeni families. Thousands of them work in its cultivating, harvesting and selling it for a financial return that helps them provide the basic needs of their families.

An employee at the tax office in Ibb governorate says that Qat has a positive effect on the household economy because it helps raising the level of income for families that grow and sell Qat, in addition to the tax revenues that supply the public treasury with money.

The employee also stressed on the need to correct the negative perception about Qat, especially in light of the current economic conditions, the deterioration of the living situation and the disruption of salaries, as Qat is a main source of income for both the farmer, the seller and the worker in the Qat farms, in addition to those who irrigate the farms, spray it and others people who benefit from growing this crop.

## Economic Investment

Nawaf Hizam, the owner of Al-Salam market for Qat in Ibb governorate, says that "the economic investment in planting the Qat tree is profitable as a result of the financial return that the investor gets from the market, and the fees he pays to the official authorities in terms of fees that contribute to supplementing the economy." He adds that "there are many difficulties that Qat sellers face in the market, most notably the high tax fees imposed by the local authority represented by the tax office, in addition to cleaning and improvement fees in the market and others."

## Qat Uproots Agricultural Trees

The increase in profitable commercial activity in selling Qat caused the uprooting of a large number of agricultural trees, which

affected the cultivation of many agricultural crops that Yemen used to export, such as coffee.

Ali Ahmed Qaid, a farmer from Al-Sohool district in Ibb governorate, says that he spent four years planting and cultivating coffee seeds in addition to growing olives, oranges, lemons and guavas in order to reap the fruits of the crops to sell and earn a financial return for him and his family.

He added, "I went to grow coffee because this crop is known for its international quality, and I expected that I would achieve a rewarding financial return, but I suffered a great loss, which prompted me to think about cultivating Qat and selling it because of its profitable financial return in the short term compared to other crops."

Approximately 2 million Rials are the revenues that farmer Abd al-Salam Qasim obtains during one year from cultivating and selling Qat in Ibb governorate. He says that the Qat improved his level of financial income and became a good source of livelihood for him. And he adds that half of the Yemeni people live on the revenues of Qat cultivation, which are among the highest returns compared to other agricultural crops which is what prompted many farmers to uproot agricultural trees and replace them with Qat trees.

Muhammad Al-Ahdal, from the Al-Udayn district in the Ibb governorate agrees with him. In fact, he converted the agricultural lands that he used to cultivate coffee, potatoes and mangos into Qat farms.

The reason for doing so is that Qat is a fast-growing agricultural crop, indicating that the annual profit of Qat cultivation is not less than three million Rials.

## Economic Resource

Abdul Salam Al-Nawab, a humanitarian and social activist, believes that the cultivation and trade of Qat represents a major economic resource for Yemeni families, but there could be other agricultural resources that would achieve a greater financial return if they were exported abroad.

## Invitation to Import

On his part, the economic journalist Faisal Darem calls on the official authorities to adopt plans to import Qat from outside Yemen, and he explains that the imported Qat will reduce the value of the local Qat and compete with it in the market, which means that farmers will tend to stop cultivating Qat, and they will turn to the agricultural of others crops, such as coffee and cash crops, which are economically feasible. He considered that this step is one of the best necessary measures to reduce the spread of Qat cultivation at the expense of other agricultural crops.

In the same context, the Director of the Tax Office for Qat Sales, Jamal Al-Suhaibi, said that the daily Qat tax reaches 29% of the sales rate and is collected at the entrances of the main and subsidiary cities by means of collection points. Ibb governorate is considered as one of the Qat-producing and consuming governorates, as its production constitutes 70% and its importation from Dhamar and Taiz governorate is 30%.

Al-Suhaibi revealed in a statement to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) the large number of Qat tax revenues in the governorate, which is estimated at 240 million per month. 20% is distributed to the local authority, 5% to the Youth Sports and Youth Office, 3% to the so-called central income tax, and 1% to the benefit of the Cancer Foundation Fund. He stressed on the role of the tax office in coordinating with the local authority, organizing and choosing the tax and Qat markets, especially in light of the spread of the Coronavirus.

## Positives for the Economy

Despite the economic damages to Qat and the sums spent by citizens in terms of money that negatively affect the provision of family needs and disturb its budget, the cultivation of Qat has advantages for the Yemeni economy, according to economist Fuad Abdul Rahim, who says that the cultivation and trade of Qat contributes to providing job opportunities for more than 13% individuals, and 33% of those involved in the cultivation and marketing of Qat. In addition, the value of taxes that the state collects from Qat sales amounts to billions of dollars annually.

## Qat: Advantages that our Reality Reveals

"Yemen is the land of Qat". That's what the tourists in Yemen claim about the country, since Yemeni citizens give such an importance to this plant in their lives. Qat is, on the one hand, a harmful plant which has been confirmed by studies, researchers and many citizens. On the other hand, the advocates said there are advantages some of which I would refer to here and they are what our present reality and the Yemenis connection to Qat reveal, which was described by the Yemeni writer, Abdul Aziz Al-Maqaleh, in his collection "The Alphabet of the Soul" in his famous poem, "I am from the land of Qat":

And Qat is the plant of friendship  
Does it ripen in our mouth  
And between our fingers...

When our friend's image doesn't twist anymore!!

Qat is the most common thing that brings Yemenis together, as the Qat gatherings are an opportunity to meet and communicate daily, whether in the countryside of Yemen or in its cities. In the afternoon, Yemenis go to the Qat-chewing gatherings, and discuss Yemen's social, economic and political issues, in addition to those of other countries, and it is admitted by many that intellectuals, politicians, economists and academics meet there to discuss various issues on which they build important decisions.

In the view of some, Qat is an alternative to entertainment and public gathering places, such as libraries, clubs, gardens and parks that citizens in other countries resort to spend their afternoons. Yemen suffers of entertainment lacks and Yemenis find in Qat-chewing gatherings an alternative to all of this. They spend time there where ecstasy and humor dominate, and just as Qat is a daily meal for Yemenis; it has become an essential and indispensable thing for attending social events, such as weddings, engagements, and religious events such as Eid al-Adha, the blessed Eid al-Fitr, and other national occasions.

For Yemeni students and workers, Qat is a means of activation and stimulation of the mind. Some workers say that their productivity at work increases in the afternoon due to their consumption of Qat. Students believe that consuming Qat increases their level of assimilation while studying, and in this regard, journalists and intellectuals assert that their best times of writing are just after chewing Qat.

The benefits of Qat extend to the economic aspect, which is not a point of view for me, but rather a scientific study, which has argued that the economic return of Qat exceeds many agricultural crops, and if the Qat and Zakat taxes are collected properly, then it will certainly contribute significantly to the State's annual budget, and that's in addition to the great revenue that Qat farmers earn from its cultivation. Moreover, a large proportion of citizens works in Qat farms and trades it in the markets, and it is, for them, the only source of livelihood that is guaranteed to continue throughout the year.

Qat lovers believe that its presence reduces or prevents the phenomenon of drugs and alcohol abuse, as it leads to a mental and physical stimulation of the body, for it is considered, according to them, an alternative product to drugs and the like, such as liquor and others. Nevertheless, some scientific studies deny this and confirm that Qat use may lead to stronger drug use.

And talking about the positive effects of Qat does not minimize its health, social and economic harms, which has been confirmed by scientific studies and research, but rather to draw the attention of the State and Qat stakeholders to the fact that there are benefits to be seen and taken into account when making decisions to address the phenomenon of Qat. For instance, it is not possible to make a decision to uproot or limit the Qat cultivation without thinking about the fate of the hundreds of thousands of citizens who make it an economic source for them and their families. So an economic alternative must be found but also other alternatives such as the building of more park and clubs to be attended by Yemenis once they quit Qat.



Written by Dr. Balkis Al-Ariki



# Qat Journey Around the World

*Yemenis in foreign countries lack many of their social habits that they used to comfortably practice in Yemen, and one of these customs that are widely accepted by the community is the habit of chewing qat. So because of the laws that are put for the Qat sale and possession in some countries, some Yemeni people are looking for different ways to obtain the qat tree, which is found in a number of countries around the world, most notably in African countries, from which qat is smuggled after its leaves being dried and milled, and packed in coffee and tea bags, reaching European and Asian countries with ordinary travelers or smugglers.*

By: Alia Muhammad  
Sawt Al-Amal  
(Voice of Hope)

## Qat Laws in the World

With the exception of Yemen, chewing, selling and possessing Qat is illegal in Asian, Arab and European countries, and a person is punished by imprisonment and a fine. Last September, the Egyptian airport thwarted the smuggling of nine kilograms of Qat, which was in the possession of a Yemeni young man and woman, hidden in secret pockets in their luggage.

China also issued a decision to prevent the entry of Qat, and classified it as a material forbidden to be used or possessed, after it was legal, and whoever is found in possession of Qat in India is punished with ten years of imprisonment, but in the African continent, Qat is considered legal, since many African countries cultivate it. As for the European continent, it classifies Qat as prohibited, and it is illegal. In 2010 the Icelandic police intercepted a smuggling operation of Qat on its way to Canada, and in May 2011, a smuggling operation of about 60 kilograms of Qat was thwarted. In 2014, the Russian police seized a Yemeni student in possession of a quantity of Qat, and he was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison.

In Turkey, Qat is classified as a

narcotic drug and nine smuggling operations of Qat were thwarted in Turkey at Istanbul airport, which were coming from East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The last operation seized by customs, estimated at 208 kilos, was included in the shipment of Moringa tea coming from Nigeria to the Czech Republic. In 2014, Britain issued a decision banning the entry of Qat, after it was the European gateway from which Qat was exported, as approximately 2560 tons of Qat used to be annually imported to Britain, and about 2.8 million pounds in taxes used to be brought.

Muhammad al-Jalal, a Yemeni academic in Britain, says that "the prohibition of Qat in Britain is not because it is a narcotic substance. There are studies that have not proven the truthfulness of this claim. Rather, Qat was classified as a stimulant, and the decision was only issued as a result of pressure from some Somali women's rights organizations, which raised complaints. Women are against their husbands spending a long time chewing and spending government aid to buy Qat, and at the present time, Qat is still sold in Britain secretly, despite the enactment of a two-year imprisonment law for drug users and 14-years for those who trade it.

## Qat Smuggling

In July of this year, Aden Airport

thwarted the smuggling of 30 kilograms of ground Qat, which was packed in tea, coffee and henna packages. Qat was smuggled this way into a number of countries in the world.

Ahmed Al-Surami, from Taiz governorate, talks about his suffering in delivering Qat to one of his relatives in China starting from the first stages of picking Qat leaves, exposing them to the sun for several days, and then grinding and packing them in special bags for tea factories and Yemeni coffee or spices or packing it as a type of henna and he adds that Qat arrives in Europe, China from Abyssinia and Somalia, and is exported via DHL. It is especially packed and preserved through "tin" and wrapped in little "tied" forms.

Abu al-Khattab Tariq Hamoud, a resident of Detroit, USA, says that Qat is found in the dried form, while Qat that comes from Djibouti is sold secretly and shipped as tea, henna or spices.

He added that Qat comes in the form of leaves from Israel and California, given that there are Yemenis who live there and grow Qat in the yards of their homes.

As for Egypt, Qat is classified as a prohibition, and the bearer is punished by imprisonment. Muhammad Al-Faqih, a Yemeni residing in Egypt says that Qat exists and is sold secretly in Egypt, and most Ethiopians bring it and Ye-

menis buy it from them, and it is sold in some Yemeni restaurants, but with complete secrecy."

In the same context, Faris Sham-san, a Yemeni TV producer, who lives in Switzerland, says that Qat comes to European countries from African countries such as Kenya and Abyssinia. He adds that "there is a number of Yemenis in European countries who chew Qat which comes in the form of a powder ground in plastic boxes."

## Qat Prices

The price of smuggled Qat in Saudi Arabia ranges between 200 and 500 Saudi Rials per package, which is approximately eighty thousand Yemeni Rials, a high price paid by the Yemeni immigrant and Saudi citizens for smuggled Qat sticks.

Ahmad Al-Zouri, a Yemeni working in Saudi Arabia says that "there is a wide demand by Yemenis and Saudis to buy Qat, and despite its high price, some people in Saudi Arabia may chew on

a weekly basis, due to the ease of obtaining it by contacting Qat sellers in Yemen."

In Kuwait, the price of a package of ground Qat reaches approximately one hundred dollars, and according to Alaw Al-Shaja'a, a Yemeni residing in Kuwait, the sums that the Yemeni residents waste on buying ground Qat is approximately sixty thousand Yemeni Rials, which is a large amount considering the salaries the residents receive.

Zayed Ahmed, a Yemeni residing in Qatar said that the price of Qat in Qatar reaches 500 Qatari

Rials, which is approximately eighty thousand Yemeni Rials, and there are many people who buy it. Zayed adds: "The Qat tree will continue to haunt us to the countries where we left to, as long as the Yemeni people cannot give up its use".





# Qat Pesticides..

## Damage the Soil, Infect Farmers With Deadly Diseases and Threaten the Lives of Qat Users

By : Shawqi al-Abaasi  
Sawt Al-Amal - (Voice of Hope)

**“ Farmer Muhammad Al-Hamdani did not know that using pesticides in the cultivation of Qat without taking the necessary precautions during the spraying process would make him vulnerable to liver disease after he discovered the cause of infection which was the result of spraying the Qat tree with pesticides without knowing the risks to his health.**

*He says that "the lack of awareness of the danger of agricultural pesticides to the health of the farmer and their effect on the Qat trees and other agricultural crops caused the deterioration in his health condition." He asserts that pesticides have become a source of concern and pose a threat to the lives of farmers who deal with them in particular, and the consumers of agricultural crops that are randomly sprayed with pesticides or with safe pesticides licensed by the concerned authorities.*

*Farmers in Yemen use agricultural pesticides that are sprayed on the Qat trees randomly and mix several types of pesticides in order to increase the production and eliminate the pests that cause damage to the Qat branches.*

### Pesticide risks

Agricultural engineer Muhammad al-Sabri says that the agricultural pesticides that are used in the cultivation of Qat have great risks to farmers and to soils which are greatly affected by the mixing of many varieties whose interaction causes damage to agricultural soil and diseases to farmers as a result of the indiscriminate use of these pesticides. He stresses to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) on the importance of promoting awareness among farmers of the risks posed by the use of pesticides and taking precautionary measures during the spraying process in farms and not using smuggled or unlicensed pesticides because of their risks to society in general and farmers in particular.

### Smuggled Pesticides

Farmers use different types of pesticides to spray on the Qat trees, most of which are smuggled to the Yemeni market and rapidly grow and change the color of Qat trees, causing the users to develop diseases such as kidney failure, liver and other diseases.

In the context, engineer Jamal Mutahar, a technician in agricultural operations in Sana'a, says that Qat possesses the largest proportion of pesticides that enter Yemen, but the disaster is that farmers use smuggled pesticides, which are considered a threat to humans and the soil because these pesticides are not subject to inspection and monitoring processes before from he competent authorities, and most of them are supplied from unlicensed factories in the country of origin, such as China and other exporting countries, and factory waste is sometimes packed and exported to Yemen.

He confirms to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) that the indiscriminate use of pesticides has high risks to the farmer, the soil and the consumer, causing the destruction of agricultural soil, death of trees, and disease resulting from accumulations for several years of indiscriminate use and smuggled pesticides that are used by farmers which are not official chemicals. Mutahar adds that "the farmers tend to use smuggled pesticides due to the lack of agricultural awareness and guidance. The farmer buys different types of pesticides, mixes them, and sprinkles them on the Qat tree or other crops without knowing the dangers of what he does and the danger that this causes to the farmer himself, especially that these pesticides are highly toxic and affect the agricultural yield, the soil, and the farmer himself."

He stresses on the importance of a decision to employ an agricultural engineer in all pesticide shops and companies to guide farmers

during the purchase of pesticides and how to deal with them for the safety of farmers and consumers. It is noted that there are many types of agricultural pesticides that are used in the cultivation of Qat, most of which are certified pesticides such as Abamectin, Imidacloprid and other pesticides that enter Yemen and are characterized as breaking during the written safety period of the product and are safe and have no negative effects on the farmer or consumer.

Farmers are advised to identify the disease present in the agricultural crop in order to find the appropriate treatment, and to present the samples to the agricultural engineer who is responsible for giving the appropriate pesticide for any problem affecting the agricultural crops, stressing on the importance of raising awareness of the use of fertilizers instead of agricultural pesticides that are dangerous to humans and soil.

On the risks of the effects of pesticides on farmers or consumers, the technical specialist in agricultural operations says that the risks of pesticides appear late as a result of accumulations for years, which leads to cancer and liver diseases, especially since farmers do not adhere to the safety period of pesticides, which ranges from one week to twenty days. So many people spray Qat with pesticides on their way to the market to sell it with its shiny look, and this is one of the reasons that pose a danger to consumers, especially since washing Qat is not sufficient to absorb pesticides and the trace remains on it even if it is washed more than once.

### Seven pesticides smuggled in the market

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the official entry of pesticides into Yemen takes place through registration in the General Directorate of Plant Protection, but there are pesticides that enter Yemen through smuggling and are a disaster for society, despite the

efforts being made to reduce the entry of these pesticides into the local market.

Engineer Ali Mehrez, Head of Field Experiments Department at the General Directorate of Plant Protection in Sana'a, confirms that the smuggled pesticides that enter Yemen are many. In fact, there are seven smuggled pesticides in the market and they are highly toxic, including Dimethoate, Methomyl, Ethion, and they were banned in 2006 from entering being highly toxic and related to cancer, as international standards have been agreed upon to prevent high-risk pesticides related to carcinogens and other diseases.

He tells Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) that Qat consumes 70 percent of the pesticides and fertilizers that enter Yemen, as it is used by farmers to stimulate, improve and beautify the Qat crop and increase the speed of crop growth to be marketed to consumers, pointing out that the volume of pesticides that enter Yemen reaches 10 thousand tons annually, and the areas of Qat cultivation in Mawiyah district in Taiz governorate, Mohabsha in Hajjah, Anas district in Dhamar governorate, Rada'a in Al-Bayda district, the Qat Al-Balut area in 'Amran governorate and Al-'Amari in Saada governorate consume the largest quantities of agricultural pesticides.

### Confiscation of 300 Tons of Pesticides

With regard to combating the entry of smuggled pesticides into Yemen, Mehrez says that the process was not limited to the Ministry of Agriculture only, and there are other bodies that must play their role, such as the security and judicial authorities, who were charged with trafficking cases to take action against smugglers, but to this day no dealer has been imprisoned. He adds that 300 tons of various non-standard pesticides were confiscated and smuggled during a campaign that took place two years ago, which was the last campaign carried out in the inspection of companies and dealers selling pesticides.

According to reports issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), there are more than 30,000 people with cancer in Yemen, and fertilizers and agricultural pesticides are among the causes that lead to diseases.

**More  
Than 30.000  
Yemeni Patients  
With Cancer**



# Qat Chewing: Habit or Addiction?

## What's the Link between Male Infertility and Qat?

### Health and Psychological Harms and Benefits of Qat and Solutions, Discussed by a Group of Doctors and Specialists

By : Rajaa Mukred  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

**“** Qat causes many diseases that affect a person's physical and psychological health. It provokes an increase in the heart rate, and also results in high blood pressure, kidney disease, and its negative effects extend to cause damage to the teeth and gums.

#### Qat and Blood Pressure Level

The study conducted by Dr. Aref Al-Nizami on the effect of chewing Qat on the blood pressure parameters of patients suffering from arterial hypertension showed that the blood pressure pathway of the chewer was characterized by high and unstable, and their heart rate was higher, especially in the evening and among men in particular.

#### Effect of Qat on the Mouth

At the dental clinic, Hashem Saad, 32 years old, is standing and waiting for his turn at the clinic. "My upper teeth fell out because of chewing Qat for a long time, and I have one molar left," says Saad.

Dr. Waddah Al-Hajj, Dean of the Dentistry Faculty at the Civilization University summarizes his speech about the harmful effects of Qat on the mouth saying that "God created the mouth and teeth to eat three meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner, for a period of one hour maximum, using them to chew food. Thus, the chewer uses his mouth to chew for more than three hours; others may use them for four to five hours, and some others ten or 12 hours. This habit causes great pressure on the teeth, and leads to con-



Dr. Aref Al-Nizami



Dr. Waddah Al-Hajj



Dr. Ismail Muharam



Prof. Ali Gamal Al-Kaf



Dr. Abdul Samad Al-Sanabani

tinuous crushing of the area where the chewing process happens, so the gums in the chewing Qat area regress, the dental roots appear in the area, and the gums become inflamed.

#### Digestive and Reproductive System:

Prof. Dr. Ismail Muharam - Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Sana'a, says that there are many damages in the reproductive system, including constipation, urinary retention, and stomach diseases, most of which are caused by the excessive use of pesticides, as they usually cause cancer, genetic diseases and congenital malformations in the stomach, and others. As for Dr. Abdul Samad Al-Sanabani - urologist, he confirms that the bad effects of Qat include the digestive, urinary, reproductive, nervous, psychological, circulatory and muscular systems.

Dr. Zeenat Radman - obstetrician and gynecologist asserts that Qat is harmful to pregnant women and causes dyspareunia, affects milk and breastfeeding, and insomnia in many cases.

#### Qat or Pesticides

A scientific study conducted by researcher Dr. Mona Ahmad Al-Kabzari, Department of Life Sciences at the Faculty of Science, Sana'a University, showed that there is an effect between

chewing Qat with pesticide residues and without pesticide residues on fertility in men, causing some of them to be sterile. According to this study, we can conclude that a large proportion of sterility cases in Yemen are mainly due to some pesticides that Qat trees are sprayed with, and which are consumed by the chewer.

This is confirmed by Prof. Ali Gamal Al-Kaf, Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the National University, who confirmed that the pesticides with which Qat is sprayed in Yemen are dangerous and toxic, including internationally banned pesticides.

Dr. Al-Hajj adds that the negative impact of the Qat may exceed the damage to gums and teeth, and may lead to cancer - God forbids- according to Dr. Al-Hajj.

On possible solutions to reduce Qat abuse, Dr. Ismail Muharam believes that awareness-raising campaigns focusing on the health risks of Qat can even relatively limit its spread.

#### Psychological Damage

Like all stimuli, Qat has a psychological effect on the chewers, as it is considered one of the factors that cause anxiety and depression, and according to Dr. Muammar Al-Fahd, specialist in psychiatric and neurological diseases, Qat has a greater psychological impact on people suffering from mental illnesses, and this

is why this group of patients should not be chewing Qat, because it interferes with their treatment, as they are more vulnerable than others.

#### Figures and Statistics

According to statistics published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017, about 90% of adult Yemeni males chew Qat for more than four hours a day.

If we come to the percentage of patients who chew qat, doctors described it as high. Regarding the relationship between Qat and cancer, Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) asked the President of the Board of Directors of the Anti-Cancer Fund (ACF), Dr. Abdul Salam Al-Madaani, who replied by saying: "We cannot say that there are cancerous diseases that were caused by Qat, so we do not have specialized research centers that confirm this hypothesis, and we do not have statistics to prove it, but we are setting up a research center in the Fund that conducts studies on the causes of cancer, and the extent to which Qat and pesticides are related to the disease."

#### Does Qat Have Health Benefits?

Dr. Waddah Al-Hajj denies the existence of any benefits for Qat. As for what some doctors have said about the role of Qat in reducing the appetite, it is an

untrue statement, as many chewers drink soft and energy drinks that contain a high percentage of harmful refined sugar. As for Dr. Ismail Muharam, he confirms that Qat is free from any nutritional value and contains nothing but stimulants.

For his part, Professor Ali Gamal Al-Kaf denied that Qat is free from health benefits, as the study he conducted with his colleague enabled him to extract a substance from Qat that acts as an anti-inflammatory and stomach cramps.

#### Is Chewing Qat an Addiction or a Habit, and How to Quit?

Dr. Waddah Al-Hajj says that the chewers of Qat cannot be called addicts; because there is a difference between addiction and habit, and if there is a will, it is possible to get rid of Qat easily, unlike drugs, and the evidence is that people who travel outside Yemen can get rid of the habit of chewing Qat without any trouble.

Dr. Muammar Al-Fahd agrees with him, as he believes that the level of toxicity of Qat that infiltrates into the blood is low, unlike drugs, the cessation of which causes a breakdown that can only be treated by taking a dose of the narcotic drug. Whether the Qat tree is harmful on health or contains useful substances, no one can deny the health risks it causes and its social and economic damage.



# Qat

## Overshadows the Agricultural Lands in Yemen

By: Alia Al-Hamati  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

**“**The Qat tree occupies a large area of agricultural land that has expanded since the second half of the 19th century. So its cultivation reached areas of historical agricultural crops in Yemen, such as coffee, grapes, grains, mangoes, and a number of other crops in the valleys and agricultural bottoms in Dhamar, Amran, Ibb and other areas, in addition to the urban expansion on agricultural lands in a number of governorates that are known for growing agricultural crops, which play a key role in the food security of Yemenis.

According to the Agriculture Statistics' Year Book of 2019, agricultural crops areas are estimated to be of 528078 hectares, where the Qat cultivation area ranked second after cereals and was estimated at 166,891 hectares. Therefore, it surpassed other crops such as fodder, grains, vegetables and cash crops, and pulses were ranked last with an estimation of 48,037.

### Drain Water

There are international predictions about the approaching time of groundwater depletion in Yemen, due to indiscriminate drilling of wells and poor water management, and the expansion of the cultivation of the Qat tree, which is considered as one of the most water-consuming plants, as it consumes 80% of groundwater. The groundwater in Yemen is subjected to annual depletion, due to the use of the flooding method to irrigate Qat farms, and these effects are negatively affected by a number of agricultural crops that depend on well water.

"We have multiple agricultural areas, and we grow some vegetables and fruits in them,

and there are a number of farmers who grow the Qat tree, but they need a large amount of water," said Abdul Qawi, a farmer in the Bani Hushaysh district in Sana'a". He adds, "My farm needs water which is 800 meters away to reach it, and I need pumps so that the water can be pumped at an expensive cost, so I decided to rely on rain water, but in vain, so I took a decision not to plant the Qat tree again."

On his part, Abdel Fattah Raziq who is a farmer in the Al-Shorfa area in Sana'a says, "Qat is an evergreen plant throughout the year and the Qat tree has a great ability to withstand the fluctuations of the weather, and it is grown in mountainous areas and highlands, because it is affected by cold, as much as it needs water continuously."

Raziq confirms to Sawt Al Amal (Voice of Hope) that more is spent on cultivating Qat than on the income. As a result, many farmers in the region have been guided to uproot it, and have returned to cultivating the crops of grapes instead of Qat.

مساحة وناتج اللقاح في الجمهورية حسب المحافظات 2019-2015						
المحافظة	المنطقة	العام	2015	2016	2017	2018
AL-Hodeidah	Area	359	353	346	346	363
	Prod.	715	712	698	698	732
Sana'a	Area	39,578	39,598	39,202	39,124	39,815
	Prod.	35,886	35,965	35,605	34,750	36,510
Dhamar	Area	15,462	15,514	15,359	15,405	15,517
	Prod.	11,538	11,672	11,560	12,427	19,634
Ibb	Area	14,879	14,978	14,963	14,394	15,171
	Prod.	18,610	18,682	18,663	17,916	23,597
Taiz	Area	12,917	12,988	12,974	12,974	12,924
	Prod.	12,127	12,225	12,212	12,603	16,009
Mareb	Area	747	732	739	739	744
	Prod.	714	689	696	696	2,431
Hajjah	Area	14,941	14,972	14,969	14,939	14,958
	Prod.	18,576	18,630	18,626	19,446	22,809
AL-Baida	Area	9,475	9,522	9,512	9,988	9,242
	Prod.	23,361	23,204	23,180	23,110	23,828
Sa'adah	Area	7,571	7,652	7,576	7,909	7,443
	Prod.	8,321	8,392	8,309	7,910	21,830
AL-Mahweet	Area	6,800	6,791	6,777	6,913	6,739
	Prod.	6,106	6,145	6,132	5,504	17,740
Lahj	Area	7,114	7,165	7,158	7,158	7,118
	Prod.	7,388	7,500	7,493	8,692	8,643
Abyan	Area	3,244	3,283	3,266	3,265	3,253
	Prod.	3,606	3,687	3,668	3,631	3,618
Hadramout	Area	0	0	0	0	0
	Prod.	0	0	0	0	0
AL-Jawf	Area	1,352	1,346	1,345	1,340	1,355
	Prod.	1,558	1,557	1,556	1,603	1,535
Shabwah	Area	98	94	94	104	95
	Prod.	191	194	193	198	177
AL-Maharah	Area	0	0	0	0	0
	Prod.	0	0	0	0	0
Aden	Area	0	0	0	0	0
	Prod.	0	0	0	0	0
Amran	Area	22,203	22,336	22,358	22,990	22,326
	Prod.	26,121	25,741	25,765	26,151	26,430
AL-Daleh	Area	6,774	5,853	5,841	5,841	5,680
	Prod.	6,968	6,548	6,585	7,038	6,844
Sana'a City	Area	11,504	11,491	11,490	11,490	11,490
	Prod.	14,119	14,096	14,095	14,095	14,223
Raimeh	Area	2,945	3,027	3,021	3,018	2,950
	Prod.	3,144	3,323	3,325	2,591	3,513
Total	Area	166,557	167,405	166,899	167,415	166,891
	Prod.	184,749	186,285	186,921	186,167	237,299
Yield	MT/HA	1,109	1,118	1,114	1,116	1,422

### Qat and Coffee

In the context, Mr. Muhammad Qaid Harith, General Director of Coffee at the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, explained: "The Qat tree has expanded in recent years as a result of the low source of income for many farmers, which made many of them looking for quick profit and great financial return". He confirms to Sawt Al Amal (Voice of Hope) that the expansion of the agricultural area of the Qat tree has had a great impact on the coffee tree, and has caused Yemen to move from the first place in coffee production and export to the 30th place in the world, as a result of the deterioration of agricultural areas, and the demand of farmers to grow Qat which necessitated the urgent need to search for solutions to reproduce coffee.

Qaid revealed the measures taken by the ministry to improve the quality and raise the productivity of the coffee crop, as the ministry adopted the production of one million coffee seeds for the 2019-2020 agricultural seasons and issued a decision banning the importation of coffee from abroad. This decision has in fact encouraged farmers to return to their interest in coffee tree and its cultivation indicating that the surface of coffee planted increased by more than 34 thousand hectares, and the production of coffee increased from 18 thousand tons to 19 thousand tons, and more than 400 thousand coffee seeds were planted in a number of coffee-producing governorates, in a positive step aimed at confronting the encroachment of the Qat tree and clearance of its area over The farmland.

### Qat and Soil

The Qat tree grows in multiple types of soil, and a large number of farmers depend on pesticides and chemical fertilizers in large quantities, believing that it increases the speed of the Qat crop growth two or three times per year, which leads to health and environmental risks and the deterioration of agricultural soil.

The researcher in Agricultural Extension, Dr. Belkis Al-Ariqi, says, "There are negative effects of the accumulation of pesticides in Qat farms, as they turn into highly toxic substances due to their degradation by oxidizing agents,

and thus leading to the deterioration of soils containing multiple minerals, and their physical and chemical balance may be disturbed." She confirms to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) that submersible irrigation used in the cultivation of Qat affects and destroys agricultural soil, which requires rational use of pesticides and agricultural extension programs and activities.

"We, as farmers, do not know the instructions and directions written on the pesticides leaflet, and we use them in a random way. That's why we need to educate farmers about these instructions", says Muhammad Eisan, a farmer.

### Urban Expansion Sweeping Agricultural Lands

In addition, the General Manager of the Agriculture Office in Dhamar Governorate, Engineer Hilal Al-Jashari, confirms the increase in urban expansion that sweeps more agricultural lands, as urban agglomerations continuously devour thousands of agricultural hectares in their never-ending expansions.

He says that "the problem has exacerbated in the governorate during the recent period, considering its location in the center of Yemen and the availability of public services, which made it a major center of attraction for many citizens, most of whom were displaced from neighboring governorates. This has led to a significant increase in population, causing an expansion at the expense of the agricultural land on the Northern and the Western sides classified as one of the fertile agricultural valleys, in addition to the spread of Qat cultivation in most of the agricultural bottoms and valleys in the governorate... He called for emergency intervention from the concerned authorities to prevent construction in agricultural lands, seizure of the urban plans of sectors that include agricultural lands, and exploit of these areas in grain cultivation and other agricultural crops, leading to self-sufficiency, or securing a portion of the basic food.

The Qat tree is one of the most important plants that generate a large income for millions of Yemenis who cultivate or trade it, and it is widely cultivated, especially in the northern and central mountainous regions.



# Aden: Qat Markets Challenge Corona

By: Manal Amin  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

**The Yemeni citizens face many difficulties and crises that continue to plague them from all directions, owing to the ongoing series of conflicts in a number of Yemeni governorates for years, and the spread of Covid-19 virus has added a new crisis to the deteriorating health sector in Yemen. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of November 6, the number of people infected by the new Coronavirus Covid-19 in Yemen has reached approximately 2,067 cases, not to mention the number of deaths. Despite the preventive measures taken in the country, the Qat sector has remained an exception, as people were divided between supporters and opponents of its closure, coinciding with the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Aden.**

## Corona Virus: A Big Lie

In his interview with Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope), Abu Hisham Walid, one of the frequent goers of the Qat market in Aden, said that he did not believe in the existence of the Coronavirus in the country, and he continued by saying that the spread of this virus in Aden is a big lie of which they laugh at poor countries, and we are not afraid basically. All those who died in Aden during the past periods was because of dengue fever, malaria, and CHIKV (chikungunya infection) left by rain and torrents.

He added, "Not a single day goes by without me chewing Qat. It is the thing that relaxes my nerves after a hard day at work, and I'm not keen on wearing masks when I go to the market, so Al-Hafiz is Allah (God is the protector)".

And about following preventive measures when entering crowded places, the citizen Ahmed Salem said, "I was one of the people who use to wear masks and gloves when going to the Qat market, especially after the large outbreak of pandemics that happened in Aden during the last month of Ramadan, the emergence of the Coronavirus, and the failure of procedures to close the Qat market, which came as a precautionary measure to limit the spread of the virus, in order to preserve my health, despite my need to chew Qat on a daily basis."

He indicated that he no longer wears masks like before, because the health situation in Aden has become relatively stable, despite all what's being said about the possibility of facing a second wave of the virus.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 90% of males chew Qat in Yemen, while the proportion of females is relatively about 73%. Local and international studies and reports indicate that Qat accounts for more than 50% of Yemeni's modest family income in many Yemeni governorates.

Abdo Ali Maqwati, a seller in the Qat market located in the Khur Maksar district in Aden says, "Despite all the measures that have been taken to confront the Corona virus, the demand for Qat purchase was and continues to be. So, I'm not ready to lose my customers, and I have never stopped work, not even for a day, because Qat is my only source of income".

Regarding the preventive measures, Abdo added, "In the month of Ramadan, the health situation was very difficult, especially with the spread of fevers and epidemics, and I used to wear masks during the day while selling, but after the health crisis had eased, I stopped wearing them".

## Qat market does not follow the measures

The Qat market in Yemen, especially in Aden, is among the markets that did not care about the preventive measures that were taken by the competent authorities, to avoid the spread of the virus, especially with the beginning of its appearance in April of this year in the town of Ash Shahr in Hadramaut,

where schools, mosques and universities were closed, even public markets and employment institutions. However, the Qat market did not adhere to these preventive measures.

## Qat Accounts For More Than 50% Of Household Income

The undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Health and Population in Aden, Dr. Ali Al-Walidi told Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) that "Since the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in the world at the beginning of the current year 2020, the Yemeni Ministry of Health has taken preventive measures even before the first case of the virus appeared in our country, and the frequency of these measures increased after registering the first case of infection, in order to meet all the challenges faced by the health sector in the various Yemeni governorates and prepare for any emergency."

He explained that the places that caused the most problems and difficulties in implementing the closure decision are the Qat markets in most Yemeni governorates, as they did not adhere to the preventive measures for the emerging Covid-19 epidemic. On the contrary, these markets became more crowded, especially with the implementation of quarantine decisions, as its users ignored all the health measures that prevent gatherings in crowded places, and the mouthpiece saying, "O Bou Zaid, I wish you didn't invade."

## The Most Dangerous Places

Al-Walidi confirmed that the Qat markets in Aden and the rest of the Yemeni governorates are among the most dangerous places due to the crowd that leads to the transmission of the virus among market-goers more, prompting them to guide the competent authorities to quickly close the Qat markets for a period of two weeks, as a precautionary measure during that period. The market closure did not continue, and it was retracted.

Regarding the second wave of the Corona pandemic, which was warned by Oxfam International, Al-Walidi stressed on the fact that the Ministry of Public Health and the population, in cooperation with other ministries, are taking all necessary health measures in its governmental and private facilities,

to avoid the spread of the virus, and obliging citizens to strictly implement the preventive measures.

## Suffering of Aden in the Month of Ramadan

The month of Ramadan 2020 was one of the most difficult months that has passed in the city of Aden, as fevers have spread this month due to the rains and torrents that struck the city in mid-April, in addition to the spread of the Corona pandemic, the closure of most hospitals to patients, and the collapse of the health system.

This caused a lot of deaths, as the number exceeded 1,000 cases during the month of Ramadan, according to the data of the Civil Registration Authority, which confirmed that the number of burial permits issued by the authority during the holy month reached between 60 to 90 deaths every day until the end of the month. Despite this, the Qat markets remained crowded during that period, and the purchasing power continued.

Regarding this matter, the journalist and photographer Majed Abdullah told Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope), "During the past month of Ramadan, Aden experienced the worst health and environmental disaster in the city in time, and despite the efforts to implement preventive measures to confront the virus and epidemics, adhere to social distancing and try to shut down the markets by force, it did not work, as many people, especially those who go to the Qat markets, did not abide by these procedures. In fact, the decision to close the Qat markets in the city led to the opening of new markets, on street corners, parked cars, and in places out of sight in the city, causing a riot of Qat sellers (Al-Muqawata).

## Importance of Opening Qat Markets

Abdullah added: "Overcrowding into Qat markets, especially with the outbreak of the Corona-virus, is a great risk that the Yemeni citizens are taking in order to obtain Qat, being indifferent to the procedures of social distancing, and completely forgetting that they may be exposed to infection during the purchase process from the Qat seller (al-Maquti), or the customers who get in contact with them". And regarding the congestion reduction, Majed points out on "the importance of keeping Qat markets open, as they have been the only refuge for Yemenis (men and women) for hundreds of years, even with the emergence of the second wave of the Corona pandemic that we are currently being warned about, in order to avoid the strong crisis that occurred during the first wave, but we are with the imposition of preventive measures on the sellers and buyers in the Qat market, as they must be obligated to keep distance between them and wear masks".





# Qat: One of the Causes of Family Disputes in Yemen

*Talking about the Qat tree in Yemen is not limited to its seizure of the country's coffee cultivation, fruit and legume trees, but extends to its central position among Yemeni families, as this tree is an essential part of the daily life of families, and is directly related to their psychological, economic and social lifestyle.*

By: Rajaa Mekred  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

The fact that most of the monthly budget is allocated to the household for the purchase of Qat affects the living situation of Yemeni families, as there is a shortage of basic food, drinking, and clothing, as well as a shortage of school supplies for children's education, which continues to cause family problems.

Hajar Ali says, "The common factor among most families where Qat is used is that they spend a large part of their monthly income on this tree, at a rate that exceeds what they spend on educating their children and providing for their basic needs". She adds, "Qat is one of the causes of widespread unemployment in the society especially among the youth, and it also holds large tracts of agricultural land, as the cultivation of Qat has prevented the country from achieving self-sufficiency in basic crops".

#### Psychological and Health Damages:

When talking about the psychological and health state of the Qat chewer, we mainly mean the state of addiction that accompanies many chewers who cannot give up the habit of chewing Qat even for a day, but this does not mean that this is a general case, as in rare cases, some people refrain from chewing Qat after their first experience.

Among those who did not like Qat and refrained from using it after experimenting it was Muhammad Al-Walidi - a head of household, from Sana'a, who

refused to chew Qat and attend the chewers gatherings, due to the health ailments he suffered from when he "chewed Qat" for the first time while he was still a fourth-grade child. When his father - who he describes as one of the greatest muwalaa (addicts) to Qat came with his guests to the gathering, Muhammad sat with them, chewed and swallowed Qat, which caused him stomach ache and nausea, prompting him to take a vow on himself never to experience it again.

Al-Walidi adds, "Since I was a child, I have not been convinced of the Qat-chewing habit, and I used to feel bored during its gatherings, because it negatively affects human mental and physical health and is a waste of money.

Walid (Abu Khaled) - from Amran governorate agrees with Al-Walidi, as he sees that Qat has psychological damages that are revealed on the face of the chewer, especially after chewing Qat (after taking it out of his mouth), where the chewer sits among his family members, gloomy and miserable, unwilling to talk to them or give them any attention.

Hajar commented by saying: "The long-term psychological effects of Qat go beyond its immediate effect. In the long term, the chewer may suffer from health disorders that affect the physical and psycho-



logical health. Its psychological effects include depression, hyperactivity, movement and speech, violence, aggression, anxiety and tension. Its health effects include increased heart rates, high blood pressure, and mouth ulcers".

#### Parents' Preoccupations in Qat Sessions Creating a Gap that Socially Affects Families

**Social Damages:**  
Qat is considered one of the reasons leading to family or societal disintegration, because the father goes to the Qat gatherings, and the mother goes to the "Tafrita" gatherings (the place where women gather to consume Qat).

Journalist Khalil Sufyan believes that the negative social impact of Qat is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that the head of the household sits for long hours in the Qat gatherings away from his family, which simply means his preoccupation instead of spending time with them, and his inability to carry out his duties and fulfill his social responsibilities towards them, and meet what they need from care and attention, as he is not able to give them enough time to spend with him; this deficiency creates a "gap" that socially affects the family.

Which means that children are the biggest victims in the family where one of the parents or both chew Qat, and regarding this matter, Hajar says, "Chewing Qat for long hours away from home has a

negative effect on children, as most children are deprived of their parents' tenderness, because of their distance from them and their sittings for long hours in Qat gatherings," which drives children to play on the streets for long hours, and makes them vulnerable to various forms of physical, psychological or sexual violence, especially in the absence of parents".

#### Youth and Qat

The youth group is one of the most vulnerable to Qat due to the emptiness they live in the absence of places designated to spend their free time, in addition to the fact that a number of youth see that Qat helps them focus, which makes it easier for them to study and do different jobs, without feeling tired and exhausted.

Jamil Hifzullah Bunyan, assistant professor of Social Theory in the Department of Sociology at Sana'a University, says, "Qat has many varied effects, and a health, economic, social and cultural impact, and the prevailing culture in Yemeni society has always perpetuated the concept that Qat helps with achievement and concentration especially in studies".

Bunyan added that "in general, Qat is a waste of youth's money and time, as the time to chew it may reach ten hours.

Owing to the deterioration of the general situation in Yemen, Qat remains the only refuge in which many Yemenis find a getaway that helps them forget about their conditions in a country undergoing its worst crisis ever.

## Rituals of Qat and Shisha Gatherings and Clothes and Jewelry bragged about among Women

By: Alia Al-Hamati  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

**"The proportion of Yemeni women chewing Qat and smoking shisha in their private gatherings has risen. These sessions are usually group or individual ones, on a daily or weekly basis, accompanied by a number of rituals that are bragged about, competed through and spread on social media, especially via WhatsApp."**

"The more things are forbidden, the more popular they become"

After the habit of chewing Qat was preserved to men, it became usual to see women in the "Tafrita" session (Female Qat session), where a large proportion of college girls and women, employees and housewives now attend women's Qat sessions, as the latter has become a daily ritual that they cannot give up.

Regarding the Yemeni women motives for chewing Qat, Nermi J. J says: "I learned to chew Qat and smoke shisha when I was twelve years old. When I was upset, I used to chew Qat, because it gave me a kind of temporary relief". Nermi is happy that she meets with her friends on a regular basis in Qat gatherings.

As for Hana A.M., she says, "The reason for the increase in the use of Qat and smoking shisha among Yemeni women is due to their psychological state and their miserable living situation, which made them find that using Qat and smoking shisha are a type of haven to spend time and escape from the reality."

A.M. Hana added in a statement to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope), "After I traveled outside Yemen, I saw the difference. Life there is different. People only care about their work and spend most of their time with their families, and feel that they are psychologically stable." She asserts

that she had no difficulty avoiding Qat, and she rarely smokes.

As for the young Suzanne, she justifies the reason why she chews Qat and smokes shisha, which is due to the lack of youth, feminist, sports or social activities available to women. Suzanne believes that Qat gatherings are a place for entertainment and leisure.

As for Lamia, who is a housewife and mother of two children, she says, "The environment in which we live plays a big role in responding to the habit of chewing Qat. I did not feel integrated until after I started chewing Qat and smoking shisha with my friends, but I do not smoke and do not chew when I am at home."

#### Women Financial Independence

Many employed women have a stable monthly income source, which enables them to allocate a special budget to buy Qat and smoke shisha, says Warda, who works as an employee, "I used to get Qat from my father or my brothers, but today I became financially independent, so I buy and get Qat from the seller who delivers it to my place".

Young Amjad Muhammad says, "The women's Qat gatherings are very expensive, compared to men. Men only need a Qat package and a bottle of water, while women's sessions need some light food before Qat, in addition to hot and cold drinks while chewing Qat".

In the same context, Waheeb, the owner of a shop that sells flavored Muassal and Hookah, says that the percentage of girls who visit his shop is high, and their ages range from 17 to 50 years, some of whom come on a daily basis and others on a weekly basis. He added in a statement to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope), "Many girls change their

shisha and spend exorbitant sums of money, out of love for appearance and bragging among their friends".

#### Social Advantage and Cultural Development

Many women believe that smoking shisha and consuming Qat is a social advantage and cultural development they brag about, and the important part for many women in the Qat sessions is to show up in the most beautiful dresses and accessories. The woman, who invited her friends to the session, prepares snacks and drinks for her guests before the start of the Qat session.

Basma, a university graduate, believes that there are cultural and social developments that have strengthened women's sense that chewing is one of their rights. She adds, "I used to neither chew nor smoke, but I got into this habit to keep abreast of the times, change the boring routines and fill my spare time."

Anoud S. R., a high school graduate, says that she is waiting anxiously for Thursday, because she meets her friends to chew Qat and smoke shisha.

And she adds, "Before chewing Qat, lights, candles and artifacts must be prepared for pictures, and we post them on our status on WhatsApp, as a kind of ritual that we are accustomed to do in the Qat sessions."

#### Public Parks and Cafés

In recent times, there have been a number of private cafés and lounges that girls use to smoke shisha.

Nasser, a worker in a café said, "They accuse us of encouraging smoking, but they don't know that those who go to the café ask for shisha, and the turnout of girls and women at the café is in-

creasing, especially after they found it as a place for entertainment and recreation." Considering that these projects generate reasonable profits.

#### Between Acceptance and Rejection

In the context, Dr. Sadiq Al-Sayyadi, a specialist in health education in Aden, said: "It is difficult to set restrictions that prevent women from chewing Qat because men chew, and no restrictions can be imposed on them, and the habit of chewing Qat in the countryside is related to the work of women in growing and picking Qat".

In a statement to Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope), he added that the habit of smoking shisha is an alien to society, and it is a completely unacceptable and unpleasant trend, given the health damage it carries.

Ali Al-Ajri, a writer and journalist, says, "My personal conviction is that a harmful thing affects both sides, whether men or women, but in our society many people do not usually accept women chewing Qat because of her connection to the family, and therefore it is possible for these gatherings to distract them from carrying out their duties".

Some believe that the phenomenon of Qat abuse and smoking shisha among Yemeni girls and women has become a concern, given the health effects on girls. Studies and medical reports have confirmed that smoking and the use of Qat by pregnant women increases the chances of developing preeclampsia, and smoking sometimes causes many extensions of the placenta in a pregnant woman, causing the death of the baby inside the womb, due to calcification and blockage in the placenta. Moreover smoking affects the health of women in particular, being a major cause of cervical cancer and cardiovascular diseases, negatively affecting reproductive function, and causing osteoporosis, especially in older women.





# Youth and Students' Abuse of Qat: Extra Activity and Temporary Optimism!

**By: Hanin Ahmed**  
**Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)**

The phenomenon of Qat abuse among youth and students has dramatically increased in recent years. They justify their abuse of the latter by means of helping them review their lessons, while others believe that the lack of job opportunities and leisure places has contributed to the high percentage of youth Qat chewers. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 80% of males and 50% of the females consume Qat.

Sessions of Qat abuse, or the so-called "moqel", often begin after lunch at noon, when the Qat chewers "muwalaa" carry their bags full of green leaves and proceed to chew "takhzeen", either in group or individual sessions. The Qat abuser from youth and different age groups justify by saying that it relaxes their nerves, while others believe that it makes them focus and gives them motivation, while helping them accomplish all their work.

## Same Habit Different Causes:

Omar Mahmoud, a student at the Faculty of Engineering in Aden, says, "I started chewing Qat at the age of nineteen, and I do it daily because it helps me sit at home, and focus on the reading of my textbooks". He adds, "Qat is not considered as a negative aspect or a waste of time, according to what some have said and exaggerated about, and it is better than going out and sitting in the streets."

## Where to Go?

This phrase was repeated by the 18-year-old young Muhammad Saleh, who chews daily and wonders what he is supposed to do being someone who has plenty of time but cannot find a place dedicated to him. Saleh notes that he is being criticized by his family and the surrounding community concerning his addiction to Qat. According to Muhammad, Qat is "a way of enjoyment without disturbing anyone or causing a mess."

## A habit or an infection?

Not only are usually young men Qat users, but many girls find Qat a means to blow off a little steam, which makes many of them consume it significantly. Nabila Saeed, a 20-year-old girl says that Qat makes her feel comfortable and psychologically stable. Hence, she has started chewing it since entering college, while meeting her friends every weekend for women's "Tafrita" sessions.

She adds, "I did not see any reason to criticize Qat. Instead of practicing other negative habits, it is better for youth to sit at home and do useful work, as Qat helps them accomplish these tasks, which, by the way, is one of the advantages of chewing Qat."

**“80% of Males and 50% of Females Consume Qat”**

## Yemeni Muwalaa Syndicate:

The "Yemeni Muwalaa Syndicate" was established at the end of 2014 A.D., and Khalifa Alwan, Secretary General of the Yemeni Muwalaa Syndicate, says: "The idea of establishing the syndicate began by the satirical writer Marwan Kamel, who launched it on the social networking site Facebook. The idea was widely welcomed, especially by writers and poets after the declaration of its establishment, which stipulated the appointment of syndicates in most of the governorates of the Republic. He adds, "At the beginning, the Syndicate carried out its activities through its Facebook page, and then it opened a cultural club and a weekly book fair, in addition to other cultural activities."

The Syndicate page on Facebook includes about 30 thousand people from 18 years and above. There are no conditions for joining the syndicate, and there is no law, as it is a mocking and spontaneous political entity, through which people interacted because of their association with the same phenomenon.

Alwan points out that the Syndicate celebrates

the so-called "Eid Al-Ghosh" (Branch anniversary) on July 12th of every year, by decorating the Facebook profile picture with a distinctive frame, and holding traditional artistic parties in some areas.

Alwan affirms that the Syndicate's objectives are based on criticizing the bitter reality in a cynical way, as the chewer "muwalaa" conveys a positive image of Qat and the proper ways to chew it. In addition to that, they do not publish negative images of the Yemeni citizen on social media. Also, the syndicate seeks to enhance awareness of the "Muwalaa" about the necessity to ensure that they do not neglect their responsibilities towards their families, while correcting the wrong perception about Qat users, and other advices provided in a way that makes people accept them which reflects on their practical behavior.

## Reactions:

The society's reactions to whether or not people tend to consume Qat vary, as opinions are different between supporters and opponents of it, whether on social media, in public sessions, or other places. On the one hand, there are many hashtags and pages spread on social media sites that criticize Qat, but on the other hand, other pages were created on various social media sites that support and encourage Qat use because of its advantages, according to the chewers "mukhazinoon".

According to studies and researches carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO), Qat was classified in the year 1973 A.D. as a narcotic.

# Why Chewing Qat? Various Answers and Flimsy Justifications

**By: Alia Muhammad – Rajaa Mekred**  
**Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)**

Many young people of different groups, ages and social classes embrace the habit of chewing Qat. They spend many hours chewing it. This habit is repeated daily, and some of them may allocate specific days of the week. Recently, we have been witnessing a significant increase in the proportion of "mukhazineen" (chewers) among the youth. So why do they chew Qat? Is it an escape from the reality they're living? Or is it a habit they are accustomed to practicing

To answer this question, Sawt-Al Amal (Voice of Hope) polled opinions to find out the reasons that lead them to chew Qat.

The beginning was with Mustafa Al-Sama'i, who says, "I chew to meet my friends, sit with them, discuss our issues and find solutions to every problem." And he adds, "I chew with my family and my neighbors, I share their joys and sorrows, I chew to do my job to the fullest."

As for Firdaws Al-Faqih, she said, "I used to chew until I became addicted to it and it became a daily habit for me."

## Escaping from Reality

Kifah Muhammad believes, "there is no escape from the bad reality in which we live, boredom and emptiness, except through Qat sessions in which we waste our time and forget our worries."

As for Wissam Ahmed, an English teacher, he says, "I chew two days a week, and I feel psychologically comfortable, but if I chew daily, I would

feel upset, so I do not like to overdo it."

## Social habit

Journalist Saleh Al-Yafei says, "When I consumed Qat, it was not the result of desire, but it was a stage of recklessness, because society wanted it, and also because of the influence of friends, but I found myself surrounded by barbed wire, in which there are many illnesses as a result of toxins and pesticides – some of which internationally prohibited - that are used in the cultivation of Qat". He adds, "After that, I quit Qat permanently, after I became convinced that it was useless to consume it as much as it causes many diseases."

For his part, Fuad Al-Kahlani, a young man and an employee in the private sector, says, "I used to consume Qat at an early age on chewing occasions, and after that I got addicted to it. Because of the jobs I used to get, I had to consume Qat, as I worked in carpentry, and after that as a guard in a bank, and all these jobs required Qat consumption in order to become dynamic and get the job done". He adds: "The day that I do not consume (chew) Qat, I either spend more money than the cost of Qat or resort to sleep, and if I decide to go out, I don't know where to go due to the lack of parks and gardens."



## Work Environment

Abadi Ahmed, a salesman in a mu'assel shop, consumes Qat because he works in the shop for a long time and feels bored if he does not chew, and he cannot get his job done, especially since the latter requires him to remain vigilant. Therefore, he will not be able to stand in the store, get the job done and communicate with customers as required.

In the same context, the young Shihab Al-Maliki asserts that work requires Qat consumption. He adds, "I am a taxi driver which requires me to sit for long periods of time that sometimes last up to 10 hours, so I need to chew Qat to focus while driving the car on the streets and transporting customers."

On the other hand, Amin Omar, a young man in Taiz, says, "I consume Qat in order to rest after work that lasts for ten hours a day, and sometimes an hour or two more". And he adds, "Consuming Qat is not an addiction, but after the effort made at work, I feel that the four or five hours of chewing Qat are a reward to myself! Of course, we feel a little bit euphoria!"

## Stability at Home

Wassim Al-Absi says, "I chew in order to settle in my house, and avoid wandering on the streets.

I also chew so that the so-called "Razem" does not come to me, and I sleep and get up in the morning for work.

As for Hana' Ali, she does not agree with him, as she considers the "Razem" a simple excuse, and this belief is incorrect.

She adds: "A month has passed since I quit chewing, and everything is normal, no effect whatsoever, but what I notice about the women who chew Qat, is that they do it for the mood and the feeling of comfort, no more no less. They consume Qat and hookah, and listen to songs". And Hana' continues: "Despite the long time during which I consumed Qat, I still do not know the meaning of the saying, "haven't you reached the high effect yet"? (I haven't reached the euphoria while chewing Qat), or haven't felt the taste of Qat, and I do not feel that Qat makes me stay up late, so when I stay up, it is by will and not because of Qat."

And she concludes by saying: "Perhaps I do not know the meaning of Qat, since the symptoms do not affect me, but all I know is that it is not more than a waste of time and money."

Many Yemenis of various groups boast of chewing Qat, believing that it provides them with vitality and dynamism, and helps them get their jobs done, neglecting the negative effects of Qat and the diseases that are spread due to the pesticides used in its cultivation.

The phenomenon of Qat chewing remains a thorny problem that requires many solutions to be addressed socially, economically, healthily and psychologically, and it is hoped that the day will come when we do not see chewers in Yemen, even long after.

# Qat: Societal Efforts in Sana'a and Youth Initiatives in Aden

**Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)**  
By: Rajaa Mekred

The recent spread of Qat chewing among youth, women and children has led to an increase in calls for a serious stand against this phenomenon, especially since its negative effects are reflected on the psychological, physical, social and economic health of the consumer, which prompted a number of institutions to adopt initiatives that contribute to sensitizing the target groups in the society about the negative effects of Qat.

Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope) shed light on the most prominent of these initiatives, their role in the awareness, and the solutions they provided in order to curb the spread of this phenomenon.

The Eradah Foundation for a Qat-Free Nation was established in 2013 and continued until 2017 A.D. This foundation aimed to build a cultural divide between the old and the new generations, with its awareness program targeting children who chew Qat, focusing its field activities on schools and aiming at urging students to quit the habit of chewing Qat.

Nasser Al-Shamaa, Executive Director of "Eradah" Foundation, says that there are positive results in raising students' awareness in schools, as many of them have shown response and abstained from chewing Qat.

In addition to its field visits, the foundation has held conferences, flashes and documentaries which show the harms of Qat. It has also got an extensive awareness-raising presence on social media.

Al-Shamaa added that the foundation's team would like to resume the awareness work that was stopped due to the country's situation, but the people, according to him, have urgent priorities that make it secondary for them to be educated on the harms of Qat.

Al-Shamaa believes that raising awareness of the dangers of Qat is a collective responsibility of the state, civil society organizations, and members of the society as a whole, and confirmed that the foundation will resume its activities once the situation in Yemen stabilizes.

As for Al-Najat Foundation for Qat Effects Awareness (NFQEA), which was established in 2009, is still pursuing its awareness-raising work. It works on guiding the community towards other alternatives than wasting time in Qat gatherings, by spreading concepts against Qat in order to bring about a positive change in the knowledge and behaviors of the target population, especially among the youth.

The Foundation works in educational awareness areas aiming at guiding the target audience through several projects, including



***Sana'a: Societal Efforts Aiming at Restraining the Qat Phenomenon***

the free of charge "Youth Without Qat" magazine, the theatrical performances, flashes and short films project, the awareness sessions for the chewers "mukhazineen" project, and the studies, research and books printing project.

The foundation also provides awareness-raising efforts in the field of health, as it has presented projects including: safe motherhood projects, child protection, reduction of child labor in the cultivation, sale, and sprinkle of Qat, behavior change, psychological support, sports as an alternative to Qat, environmental protection from Qat poisons, projects in the field of alternatives and empowerment, and it has financed small projects and alternative crops encouraging projects.

The number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of the awareness and educational activi-

ties provided by the foundation during the period (2010-2019 A.D) reached 3,368,560, of whom 2,436,808 were males (72%) and 931,752 were females (28%).

Ali Al-Dayani, Media and Public Relations Officer at the foundation says that Al-Najat Foundation is facing administrative difficulties, represented

by the unwillingness of some to change the directive discourse of the foundation. This matter becomes more complicated by mutually reinforcing various factors such as the rootedness of the Qat phenomenon in the consciousness of the Yemeni people, as well as the country's conflicts that exacerbated the humanitarian and economic conditions, which led many to work in their own ways as a solution to the unemployment problem and disruption of salaries. In other words, cultivating and trad-

ing Qat represents the main source of income for hundreds of thousands of families, and the increase in the proportion of people who consume qat has been observed in recent years as a venting behavior through which some hope to escape from the pressures of life left by the conflict, in addition to an important factor which is the low level of awareness among the majority of Yemenis.

And regarding the question of Sawt Al-Amal "Voice of Hope" on proposed solutions to curb the phenomenon of Qat, and on whom this responsibility falls, Al-Dayani answered that any proposed solutions will not be useful and will be absorbed into a comprehensive national campaign against Qat unless they are based on an objective and scientific study of the phenomenon and its effects on the State and community level.

Ali indicated that solutions should take a holistic nature, taking into account finding solutions that satisfy farmers, traders and intermediaries on the one hand, and on the other hand, there must be other alternatives for young people who chew Qat in order to fill their spare time, taking into account previous successful experiences in our country and other countries in this regard.

Al-Dayani delivers a message stating that Qat is a social phenomenon rooted in the structure of the Yemeni society and is a natural result of the absence of effective policies to limit its harm, which has exacerbated over the past decades, and the issue of dealing with it is not an easy and trivial matter, as it has become a complex marred by social complications, exceptional considerations, and the responsibility of solving this problem falls on the shoulders of everyone, starting with the State with its various apparatus, through all official and popular efforts, from institutions, bodies, government, political parties, mass organizations, associations, syndicates, and other civil society institutions, and finally with the citizen who must be a partner in developing solutions and a participant in their implementation.

As for the "Yemen Without Qat" Foundation, which targets the different groups of society, it presents its awareness campaigns through magazines, flash drives, and various awareness campaigns. The last one was six months ago, when it organized a Qat-less wedding. Mahmoud Al-Amawi, CEO of the Foundation, says that the Foundation has stopped issuing the magazine, due to the lack of support. Al-Amawi delivers a message in which he says, "We want to live in prosperity that would be reflected in various levels, but which has not come to us until now because of the existence of the Qat tree."

## Aden: Youth Initiatives To Raise Awareness of the Harm Caused By Qat

By: Hanin Ahmed  
Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

With the spread of the phenomenon of chewing Qat among youth throughout Yemen, many youth initiatives seeking to spread health education and organize awareness campaigns about the negative effects of Qat, have emerged.

A number of youth initiatives have been launched in Aden seeking to raise awareness of the harm caused by Qat, such as the "Guys We Boycotted Qat" initiative, which is a youth initiative that seeks to raise awareness of the harms caused by Qat, and it aims to fight the use of Qat and convince as many youths as possible to refrain from chewing Qat, and to

find suitable alternatives for those who abstain from using it, in addition to spreading a health education in the community, and organizing awareness campaigns in schools and universities.

Sherif Al Housham, head of this initiative, states: "Our mission is to educate youths about the need to avoid chewing Qat, and to fill their spare time with useful things". He adds: "Activities such as planning leisure trips, holding tournaments, raising awareness

of the value of sport, and learning new skills could save the future."

**Willingness breaks the habit**

Ali Houssam - Dentist and member of "Guys We Boycotted Qat" initiative states: "I gave up on chewing Qat with complete conviction, and got lots of support, so we offered encouragement and advice to each other. And he adds: "I saved the money I used to waste on buying Qat, and my mental and physical health conditions improved".



Ali hopes that all the youth will cooperate with the initiative and support the people in charge of it, in order to curb the spread of the Qat-chewing phenomenon.

**Point of view:**

Marwa Kamel - Lecturer at the Amin Nashir Institute, specialized in Sociology and counseling, states that: "It is baseless to link the phenomenon of Qat abuse to the pretext of escaping from. For instance, many businessmen chew the finest types of Qat, and its consumption may seem a negative social phenomenon, but compared to other phenomena affecting our society, it is less harmful". Marwa hopes that youths quit the habit of chewing Qat, and she urges them to think seriously about getting clean and investing their time and effort in improving themselves.



## Special Rituals to Consume Qat: “Al-Shanani” the Enemy of “Al Mokhazineen”

By :Alia Muhammad  
 Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

The rituals and customs that usually accompany Qat chewing vary among Yemeni males and females, and differ from one region to another in terms of the nomenclature and customs that accompany the sessions of its consumption. Qat sessions attended by men are called “Al-Muqil”, where a number of people meet in what is called “diwan” in which it is required to be warm, so that the Qat has a better taste in the warm atmosphere, according to their beliefs.

The process of chewing Qat, which is called “Al-Takhzeen”, begins with the person heading to the market to buy Qat branches, and then having lunch in which many “Mouwalaa” (Qat chewers) make sure it contains popular foods such as Saltah, Fahsa or spicy foods, believing that it would be appropriate before starting to chew Qat for long hours.

Regarding the quality of Qat, Abdul Hakim Al-Salam says: “The more luxurious the type of Qat is, the better the chewing session. I am one of the daily Qat-chewers and I follow a special ritual, whereby



I choose the appropriate place and the people with whom I sit to chew Qat are relatives”. He adds, “The first hour of chewing Qat is fun with some kind of humor and laughter, and the conversation is enthusiastic and loud. Three hours later, the serious discussions begin, and in the penultimate hours, we present the results and silence prevails among all”. Al-Salam considers Qat to be one of the reinforcers of social relations, and it creates connections and relationships with various social groups.

### Qat Drinks

The types of drinks associated with Qat sessions are numerous, and vary from one person to another. Some prefer to chew Qat with soda or energy drinks, and others prefer to drink barley, raisins and ginger, and there are those who prefer coffee with little sugar. In the Old City of Sana'a, people prefer to chew Qat and drink cold water, with cardamom grains added to give it a delicious flavor while drinking, as an ancient tradition used by ancestors. In Aden, incense and “Al-Shareh” songs (popular songs) are the most important rituals for Qat chewers, and some others consume it on the sound of sea waves.

### “Al-Shanani”, Enemy of the Qat chewers

“Al-Shanani” means the air that enters the place designated for the Qat chewing, and it causes severe headache if the chewer is exposed to it during the Qat chewing session. Therefore, many Qat chewers are keen to close windows, so that they are not exposed to the air. Also, many believe that moving from one place to another causes inconvenience to the “mukhazin” (chewer) and changes his mood, which makes them careful not to move from one place to another during “Al-Takhzeen” (Qat-chewing session).

## Qat in the Eyes of a Non-Yemeni: An Iraqi Recounts his Experience with Qat in Yemen

By: Nada Al-Bakary  
 Sawt Al-Amal (Voice of Hope)

Qat did not leave the Yemen tourists or residents far from this getaway as it grabbed their wills in experiencing a pernicious plant that has become present in every Yemeni house where it is hardly devoid of consumption, be it men or women.

Ghazwan Ghazi, an Iraqi citizen who lived in Yemen since his childhood, used to see a lot of Yemeni people chewing Qat and was surprised by the eagerness of people to consume it.

Ghazwan recounts that years later, and during middle school, he thought about going through his experience of chewing Qat although he was not convinced, but he continued consuming it from time to time and he visited its markets to know more about it and its types, until he be-



came addicted to it for a period of time, and he adds, “chewing Qat is a waste of money and time and it is a bad habit”.

Ghazi described his experience as follows: “I started visiting the Qat market frequently to

know more about the kinds that take me to a world full of dreams that almost end as soon as the “Sulaymaniyah” moments end up”. He also pointed out that he had become highly addicted to Qat during the years of conflict, after he had to sit at home for a long time, chewing it on a daily basis for long hours. He describes his experience as negative, even though he doesn’t consider Qat as a drug, but it only makes him feel comfortable for a while and makes him spend hours with friends in sitting sessions and listening to songs. The Iraqi citizen, Ghazwan Ghazi, concluded by saying, “Qat is a bad habit and there are some pros that can hardly be mentioned, describing his experience with Qat by negative because of its negative effects and damage, which takes away the health, money and comfort of the user”.

**The Last Ward**



By: Ahlam Al-Qubati

## Yemen Without Qat

At the end of the last century, specifically in the 1990s, a beautiful dream arose in the mind of a large group of cultural and national figures, particularly public figures, namely:

Melody of Hope was played by a group of prominent Yemeni figures, led by Mr. Ahmed Jaber Afif, one of Yemen's intellectuals and thinkers. Our imagination visited the shadow of a beautiful dream through series of cultural evenings that he presented in his cultural institution, and a group of prominent Yemeni figures participated with him in weaving the threads of this dream, including Abdul Wasa Hayel Saeed Anam, who established a facility that commemorates this wonderful dream “Yemen Without Qat Foundation”.

If we look at the enormous profits made by the authorities, the controlling individuals, and the Qat farmers, as well as the addiction of the majority of the people to consuming this harmful plant, here we know relatively how difficult it is for us to take serious steps to eradicate or limit the spread of Qat in this terrible way.

The Qat tree is at the top of the Yemeni plantation list without dispute. And if we look at all the risks it entails (especially but not exclusively), the threat of groundwater scarcity comes primarily, which appeared more than 20 years ago, and so far, no real plans or mechanisms have been put in place to avoid this danger threatening the Sana'a, Ibb and Taiz basins, particularly in other Yemeni regions, as the Qat threat to water resources is undisputedly the most prominent. A study stated that water irrigation of the Qat is estimated at 800 million cubic meters per year, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report. Another report from the World Health Organization (WHO) agreed with this, and it stated that watering Qat crops accounts for about 27% to 30% of Yemen's groundwater, according to a report by Dr. Qahtan Al-Asbahi. In this context, and according to reports and studies issued by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), it has been noted that the water consumption of the Qat plant is estimated at 800 million cubic meters per year, compared to 25 thousand tons of Qat.

In addition to wasting water reserves, there is a risk that coffee cultivation will diminish in many areas, replacing it with the insidious Qat plant for rapid profitability, as well as the erosion of the cultivation of some fruits that Yemen is known for, such as grapes and other fruits. The World Health Organization (WHO) has pointed out that the Qat trees have caused the deterioration of Yemen's already weak economy,

as farmers uproot fruit trees, including coffee trees, to replace them with Qat trees, which yields greater profitability benefits.

The area allocated to Qat cultivation in Yemen from the year 1970 until 2000, ranged between 8,000 ha and 103,000 ha. Hence, about 60% of agricultural land is allocated to Qat cultivation.

And if we look at the health risks, the World Health Organization (WHO) has classified Qat as an intoxicant that causes hallucinations resulting in negative health complications. Reports stated that Qat is also responsible for myocardial infarction, hypertension, sudden heart attacks, and is a major cause of anorexia and malignant tumors in the mouth.

of the official authorities in dealing with this deep-rooted problem has exacerbated its damages, and if we ask how the official authorities can address this problem, we can say, as a development specialist, that if the official authorities effectively adopt this national project, “Yemen Without Qat”, they can find viable solution, for example:

- Gradually banning the Qat cultivation and replacing it with other staple crops such as wheat, barley, coffee and fruits.

- Providing direct support to farmers in this regard, extensively through a set of necessary development and awareness-raising projects and programs.

- Importing Qat from other countries such as Somalia or Ethiopia with symbolic customs fees, which will contribute to reducing the reactions of Qat traders and users.

- More importantly is to focus on education, by introducing the environmental course for all types of education as a basic requirement, in which Qat and its health, environmental and economic harms are addressed, in addition to raising awareness of the importance of replacing Qat with coffee, fruit and wheat at the level of self-sufficiency and economy.

- Opening sports clubs for children and youth for a small fee.

- In addition to involving all media in an awareness-raising program on the harmful effects of Qat on agriculture, the environment, health and the family economy.